1823. IV.

REPORT

FROM THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE PRESENT

METHOD OF INGROSSING

BILLS;

&c.

Ordered, by The House of Commons, *to be Printed,*
11 *July* 1823.

REPORT.

THE SELECT COMMITTEE appointed to inquire into the present method of INGROSSING BILLS, and whether any Alterations, in the mode and kind of Writing, can be made, with Advantage to the Public Service; and who were empowered to report the MINUTES OF THE EVIDENCE taken before them;——

HAVE examined several Witnesses; whose Evidence the Committee have directed to be reported to The House.

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MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

Martis, 8° die Julii, 1823.

JOSEPH HUME, ESQUIRE, IN THE CHAIR.

Mr. David Jones, called in; and Examined.

Mr. David Jones. 8th July.

WHAT situation do you hold about the House?—Ingrossing clerk.

How long have you been in that situation?—Nearly thirty years.

Have you at any time examined the manner in which bills have been ingrossed in ancient times for the House of Commons?—Only at the desire of the chairman of this Committee, the other day.

Will you state what has been the result of your inquiries as to the letter in which the bills were ingrossed, and the manner in which they have been so ingrossed, from the earliest period you have been able to ascertain?—In Henry the Eighth's time it was a very small ingrossing hand, and very closely written; in Queen Elizabeth's, much the same; in James the First's, larger.

Still ingrossing hand?—Yes; in Charles the First and Charles the Second's time a mixture of ingrossing and round hand; from that time to this, ingrossing; at the decease of Charles the Second, the ingrossing hand was resumed, and has continued so ever since.

Are all the Acts, during the different periods you have mentioned, in rolls of parchment; or are they in any other form?—No other form but rolls of parchment.

In what sized pieces of parchment are they ingrossed; do they differ at the different periods?—Perhaps it will be best that I should produce one as a specimen.

[*The witness produced the same.*]

What is the size of that?—Twenty-seven inches by twelve inches.

Have they always been of that size?—Yes, for a hundred or two hundred years.

Is this what is commonly called a Press?—Yes, it is.

What regulations have you with regard to the number of words you are to ingross on each press?—I have been, since I was here yesterday, considering that subject, and find there is no resolution of the House, nor any regulation or order about it; but, on the average, I should think it is about five and twenty letters to a line; that would make on the forty lines a thousand letters in the skin; we cannot be very exact in that respect.

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Has the same quantity been, during the time you have mentioned, written on each sheet?—Yes, certainly; my father was fifty-two years in this House, in the same situation, and it was just the same all his time; in Henry the Eighth's time it was very close indeed.

How many letters were there in that time?—Ten times more, I dare say; it was quite minute.

And it was not very legible perhaps?—Not to old people.

How long has the present size been continued?—I should think from the time of King William.

And the same quantity in each sheet?—Yes.

Have you seen the ingrossed bills of the Lords?—Frequently; estate bills.

Do they contain more letters in each sheet?—I think they do; I think they write closer in the Lords.

Are you aware of any inconvenience that would arise from writing closer, supposing the present hand to continue; ingrossing the bills close so as to occupy less space on each sheet?—One inconvenience is this, that if it was written as close as this *(a specimen from Doctors Commons)* and three times the quantity put into a press that is done now, and that press to be done over again, it would occasion great loss of time; frequently a bill is ingrossed before every clause is finally settled; if a press is widely written it may be done over again in a short time, but if there is a larger quantity it will occupy much more time.

Would there not be a most serious inconvenience when corrections were required?—Certainly, there would be no room for corrections; if alterations and amendments should be numerous, instead of making those alterations and amendments, we throw the skin altogether away; but if it was written so close as this specimen, it would occupy three times the time to re-copy it.

Do you see any inconvenience in making the skins of half the present size?—I do not indeed, at present, see any inconvenience in that.

Would it not be more convenient in every point of view, to have a bill ingrossed on twenty sheets instead of forty, if it was equally legible?—I think that if it was written much closer, in a cramped hand, the same expedition could not be made use of in writing in that way; it is astonishing the little time that is given by the House for bills to be ingrossed; sometimes we have several hundred skins to copy against the next day; we must have the most expeditious hands; a great deal of time and pains must be taken in the closely-written sheet.

Does it take more time to copy in that closer hand?—Certainly.

Why does it take more time?—The pen is taken off more frequently; every letter in ingrossing requires the pen to be taken off; in making the letter *a*, the *o* is first made, and then the other part joined on.

Then it is gone several times over?—Yes, sometimes.

What would be the difference in point of expedition?—Indeed I cannot calculate it.

How can there be a difference of time, in writing the words close to each other, and leaving such large spaces as there are now?—If they were to be written much closer together, it would be so cramped a hand, there could not be the same expedition; that bill which is before the chairman straggles more than usual.

Do you not conceive, that the ingrossing hand when closely written, is much more legible than when it is written in this straggling way, as it is usually written in bills?—To me it makes no difference whatever, I am so used to it; those not in the habit of ingrossing themselves, are perhaps better judges than I am of that.

Can you give an opinion, what would be the difference of time in writing these two before the Committee?—[*The Bill, and the Doctors Commons specimen.*]—I should think three times the time; I am speaking widely when I state that, but it is impossible to say exactly.

What is the number of people you have employed, which renders the difficulty so great?—It depends entirely on the time the House allows, and the magnitude of it; sometimes we employ fifty, and they sit up all night to work for us.

Do you always get as many as you want?—Yes; we have no difficulty in getting hands in London.

Was not that bill which is before the Committee, written in great haste, in consequence of the press of business at the end of the session?—No doubt about it.

Have you not usually the same number of words written in the same sheet?—Thereabouts, I suppose; if they were counted there would be found about a thousand letters.

If

If it had been written when there was not a press of business, would it have been written much closer than it is now?—I think not; they are in the habit of writing in this way. *Mr. David Jones,* 8th July.

How many persons can be employed at the same time, in writing one bill?—If the bill is long we can subdivide it according to its length.

And all be working at the same moment?—Yes; a very long bill we may have twenty people on at the same time.

When a bill has been printed, do you copy from the print?—Yes, from the print; then we take several parts, and subdivide them.

In what way are the amendments made to the bills on this roll?—They are all made in the margins now, but that has not always been the case.

Then there would be no objection, as the amendments are now made in the margin, to putting the lines closer together?—Yes; frequently in the hurry of business presses are written over again; a press then might take us three or four hours to re-copy; it would be a very great hindrance to business.

Would not that difficulty be got over, by having the presses divided into two?—By making them narrower; that would be better still.

Supposing a thousand words to be the proportion for a press, would it not conduce to convenience to divide it into half-sheets, containing five hundred each?—That would facilitate.

In what manner are the skins joined together?—Just as that before the Committee; by a thread.

Whose duty is it to attach them together?—We employ a poor woman and her daughters to do it for us; it is our duty to see that it is done.

Are not mistakes liable to take place, by misplacing the sheets?—They are examined afterwards; the private bills by the parties themselves, and the public bills in Mr. Dorington's office.

Are you able to state, whether this practice of simply stitching them together, has existed always?—It has existed during my recollection, and my father's time; these seventy or eighty years.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, Examined.

ARE you able to state, from your own knowledge, whether bills have always been joined in this way?—They have, since my recollection; and all acts that I have hitherto had to take down from the record-room, have been sewn in that way; formerly, short acts were on one single skin; but wherever there are more than one, they are joined in that way. *Mr. R. H. Strachan.*

Have you ever, in old Acts of Parliament, found the string worn out?—Not the string worn out, but the parchment has torn away from the string.

What is there to prevent any person introducing one, two, or more sheets, if there should be an object for doing so?—The number of presses in the ingrossment are always examined by the clerk of the ingrossments in the House of Lords; he examines the roll by the House bill.

[*A bill was produced, with the first clause of the preamble erased.*]

Mr. David Jones, further Examined.

IS that the usual way of making amendments in the parchment?—Yes. *Mr. David Jones.*

Do you ingross the bills from the printed or the written copies?—Mostly from the printed.

Would it not be better to copy the bill complete, after all the amendments have been made, so as to admit of no interlineation on the face of the bill, and then retain it a complete clean copy, than to do it as it is done now?—As a record, this shows upon the face of it, that the orders of the House have been complied with; this may be all re-copied, and would look more neat as a record certainly.

Do you see any objection to the bills being amended, and passed on paper, and then being ingrossed fairly as a record?—It is so now; there is a bill written, which is called the House Bill, and that is referred to the Committee that fill up the blanks, and make amendments; that is a record kept in the House of Commons; the House then order this to be ingrossed, and then the ingrossment is taken to the House of Lords.

Where there has been an amendment on the third reading, the record taken up to the House of Lords, is the record with erasures?—Yes, and that is kept by the House in the custody of Mr. Strachan.

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Is that the final record?—Yes.

If one refers now to an Act of Parliament, which passed twenty years ago, which underwent amendments on the third reading in the Commons, or in the Lords, there will be found marks of erasures?—Yes.

There is never a fair copy ultimately made?—Mr. Strachan can speak best to that.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, further Examined.

DO you know how that fact is?—Of the public statutes, and the local and personal acts, and all acts having evidence clauses, which makes them (being printed by the printer to His Majesty), evidence in courts of justice, a copy is made in the court hand for Chancery, which is enrolled in the Rolls chapel, Chancery-lane, of which I am a clerk. Mr. Robert Walmisley, who was last year Clerk of the Inrolments, about a month since inrolled the acts of the last session in the Rolls chapel.

Those are fair copies?—Yes.

What do you call court hand?—

[*The witness produced a specimen.*]

How long has that practice, of using the court hand for documents, been practised?—The first record in the Rolls chapel, which came from the Parliament House, was in the reign of, I believe, Richard the Second or Richard the Third; I went up into the record-room to see them, and one of that date was shown to me.

They have continued ever since in the same hand?—They have.

Were the records of the House of Commons also in court hand?—They go from the House of Lords.

Do you mean, that the bills that pass the Lords are all ingrossed in the usual ingrossing hand?—Yes.

And after they pass, copies of them are taken in the old court hand, and lodged in the Rolls chapel?—Yes.

Do you keep any copy, in the court hand, in the House of Lords?—None.

Do you know why a different hand is used for the copies deposited at the Rolls chapel?—I should think merely to save room.

Is there less room taken up by the court hand, than in ingrossing?—A great deal less.

In what proportion?—I should think more than one half.

Might not the ingrossing hand be written twice as close as it is now?—I cannot say, I am not an ingrosser; therefore I cannot answer that question.

You read the old court hand as fluently as other writing probably?—I have just come into my situation; therefore I do not quite so well at present, but those accustomed to it do.

(To Mr. Jones.) Are you enabled to state how many letters a press of a Lords bill would hold, more than that of the Commons *(a specimen of a Lords bill being shown to the witness.)*?—This is written rather closer than ours.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, further Examined.

WHAT is the difference between the presses in the Lords and Commons?—The House of Commons presses contain from two and a half to three folios, of seventy-two words each; the Lords, generally, from three and a quarter to three and a half, according to circumstances, whether they are long words or short words.

But they are both ingrossed?—Yes.

How many letters may there be?—I cannot speak to that.

Mr. David Jones, further Examined.

ARE you aware of any reason why there should not be the same saving in the Commons bills as in the Lords; why the same hand should not be used when there is a saving of nearly one third in letters?—Only because there is more expedition.

What difference would the writing in this mode *(the common round text)* make?—This will take a great deal more time; the parchment wears out more pens than paper does.

Would it not contain a great many more words?—It will, probably, but it cannot be done in the same time.

Supposing a man accustomed to write in the round hand, to write a skin in that; do you think he would take a greater or a shorter time than he would do in ingrossing?—I am certain that if two men write, one in the ingrossing hand and the other

in

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in this hand, the man who ingrosses would write it in the least time; that if a printed bill were taken, and one should write that hand and the other ingross it, the printed bill would be finished by the ingrosser first.

With respect to the consumption of parchment, which would take the least space?—The writing would take the least space.

Much?—I should think it would; it would take, I should think, one third less.

It has been stated, that the manner in which the Lords ingross their bills, takes one third less; would the round hand take one third less than the Lords?—No, I should think not.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, further Examined.

WILL you look at this round hand, and state your opinion upon it?—This would take up less space, certainly.

(To Mr. Jones.) To what extent do you think the difference would be?—About one half of the space occupied by this *(the ingrossed Commons bill.)*

Which is most easily read?—If they are both equally well written, I should say they are both equal in that respect.

Supposing you were to leave less space between the words, and let the letters between the words be at the same distance as they are now; would that make any difference in the expedition of the writing?—No, I think not; there is less in the bill before the Committee than there is in bills usually; but where we employ so many, we cannot keep them all to the same standard.

You have stated that the sheets are all stitched together, and that the only security against interpolation is their being numbered?—They are examined afterwards, and are left in the custody of the Lords, and are copied into the court hand afterwards.

The public bills are first examined by Mr. Dorington?—Yes, after they are ingrossed; after they have been put together and sewed by the women, then they are put on the table, and amendments made, and then they go to the Lords, and are copied in the Lords office, in the court hand.

Are they examined by Mr. Dorington, after the amendments on the third reading?—No, but they are examined by Mr. Ley, the clerk at the table, and then go to the Lords.

(To Mr. Strachan.) From what period did the practice of ingrossing in the court hand take place?—I saw at the Rolls chapel, the other day, an enrolment in the reign of Richard the Second or Third, I do not recollect which, that was the first.

Could you read that easily?—Yes; it was a very beautiful hand-writing.

(To Mr. Jones) Was there any reason for resuming the ingrossing in the reign of Charles the Second?—The mixture of the two hands was very awkward, it should be either the one or the other.

(To Mr. Strachan.) Do you find much difference in the court hand written at the same period by different persons?—No; the court hand was written by very few persons.

Is the writing pretty nearly the same?—Yes.

Are the ingrossing hands more like one another than the court hands?—Yes; it is more difficult to find out in ingrossing, two persons hand-writing than it would be in common writing.

Considerably so?—Yes.

Which hand appears to you to be the most permanent and regular?—I should say the ingrossing hand.

(Mr. Jones.) The common pens will not do for ingrossing, it must be done with turkey quills.—*Mr. Strachan.* And so does the court hand require turkey quills.

[*The Committee inspected the specimens of ancient Acts printed by the Commissioners of Public Records.*]

(To Mr. Strachan.) When reference is required to be made to an original record, what record is then referred to?—If a gentleman comes to the Record office, and wishes to have a copy of an Act of Parliament, (we have them from Henry the Eighth to the present time) the difficulty of reading one of Henry the Eighth would be twice as much as one of the present time.

Supposing courts and judges have occasion to refer to the original record, the printed statute appearing to have an error in it; to what document is reference then made?—To the roll in the Parliament office.

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Not to the roll in the court hand in Chancery?—Sometimes there, and sometimes to our office as well.

Supposing there was a difference, which would be considered as the record?—I should consider the roll in Chancery.

Then if this fair copy is made after the bill has passed, do you see any great use in ingrossing in the House of Commons at all?—We keep the record that is made in the House of Commons.

Who makes the record in the court hand?—A person of the name of Walmisley has written them for some years.

What is his office?—He is in the Parliament office.

From what does he make it?—From the statutes printed by the King's printer.

What does the printed copy come from; what is the last copy of the Act of Parliament which goes out of the House of Lords, from which the printed copy in the House of Lords is taken?—That which is received from the House of Commons.

From the ingrossment which goes from the House of Commons after the amendments are made, the printed copy is taken, and from that you get the copy deposited in the Rolls chapel?—Yes; but that printed copy is first examined by the roll.

Do you copy that which is lodged in the Rolls office, from the printed copy, or from the ingrossed copy sent up from the Commons?—From the printed copy.

Is that copy which is made in the court hand, ever compared with the original roll?—No; it is compared with the printed Act of Parliament which has been already compared with the roll.

The two rolls are not compared together?—No, only in that way.

Where is the last ingrossed document, which goes up from the House of Commons to the House of Lords, kept?—In the Parliament office.

Who has the charge of that office?—Sir George Rose, the clerk of the Parliaments.

To whom would you apply if you wanted to examine one?—Mr. Parratt, the clerk of the papers.

Whose duty is it to compare the bill, after it has gone up and received the royal assent, with the copy which is printed?—The King's printer.

Is there no person connected with the House of Lords or Commons, who makes that comparison?—There is a printed copy of the statutes goes to Ireland, which is examined by the clerks in the office with the roll.

After they have been printed?—Yes.

(To Mr. Jones.)—If each press of parchment was doubled so as to form two leaves, the open edges being united in the back, do you see any objection to their being stitched together by the backs so as to form a book, and to be written from top to bottom as a book is printed, instead of writing as you now do on a roll?—I think the roll would be better preserved than the book, from its form; all ancient manuscripts are in rolls, it prevents the air getting in; they are less likely to be injured than any thing which has sharp edges.

If a dozen sheets were put together, one over another, in the form of a book, where would there be any sharp edges that would be in danger of being injured?—There might be dogs' ears, I should think, that would be in danger of being injured.

What is the expense of a thousand presses of parchment, with the quantity of writing you generally put upon them, including the parchment itself?—I think it is very considerable; we have the parchment from the Stationery-office; I dare say the presses cost about a shilling a piece.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, further Examined.

CAN you state to the Committee, how often reference is made on an average to the Acts of Parliament which are passed after you have taken the copy in court hand and transmitted it to the Rolls-office?—Unless it is an important Act, I should think very seldom or never.

Is there often reference to public acts after they have been printed by the King's printer?—In some instances, but in very few.

Do you see any reason why parchment in plain books, little handled, would not be as good a record as in rolls?—I should think that in the way we roll them up they are better preserved; they are rolled up so very tight no air can get into them; if they were in books it is likely the air would penetrate, and the books would take almost as much room.

Would

Would not acts in squares placed one above another, be as well preserved from the air and dust as rolls?—I think the rolling is preferable; they are very tight rolled. *Mr. R. H. Strachan, Mr. David Jones, and John Caley, Esq.* 8th July.

(Mr. Jones.)—There is another circumstance that occurs to me, that the leaves of parchment on every change of weather pucker up, and therefore they would be liable to injury more than in rolls.

John Caley, Esq. Examined.

WHAT office do you hold?—Keeper of records in the Chapter-house Westminster, and the Augmentation-office.

From your experience are you able to state what you consider to be the best and most convenient mode of keeping records on parchment in what shape and form?—I should conceive the best mode would be books, if practicable.

Will you state, on what account you consider them not practicable in books?—Where the matter is continued to a very great length without a break, perhaps it might be inconvenient to turn over continually leaf after leaf; but I think it is so much better to have them in books, that I would even alter my opinion in that respect, and say I would prefer books in all cases.

Acts of Parliament are in sections, and consequently the difficulty in that respect would not be great?—If the section is preserved by numbers, it would more clearly show the section by itself.

Mr. *David Jones*, further Examined.

IN what way are clauses distinguished in the ingrossment of Acts of Parliament?—By the first word of the sentence "Whereas" or "Be it further Enacted," being in German text, in very large characters.

And that commences in the middle or beginning of a line, as may happen?—Yes, so as to allow no space between for the possibility of any thing being inserted.

John Caley, Esq. further Examined.

HAVING heard that answer, do you see any objection to Acts of Parliament being ingrossed in that way, in the form of a book?—None at all.

Has it occurred to you, in what way that would be most conveniently done?—No; I have not turned my thoughts to that point. I conceive there can be no difficulty at all in having Acts of Parliament entered in a book, instead of a roll; but I will venture to state how that happens in my own practice; I am now in the habit of arranging and preparing the public records in the public offices; where I can put them in books I do it, but where they have been put into rolls, they must continue so, on account of the edges not being adapted; but I think it would have been much better if they had been originally written in books.

Will you state what kind of back or binding would be best suited for a record of that kind?—I should think all those that are on parchment, should be bound in Russia, and should be carefully kept on the shelves close to each other, or there would be a great accumulation of dust, but there could be no difficulty in keeping them so; neither should they be brought to a fire, for all vellum books warp very much by the fire.

You are able to state, whether that mode of keeping records is now in practice in Doctors Commons?—No, I know very little of Doctors Commons; but I believe it is so; I know they have a great many books done in the way I do my own. I will state however a strong objection to rolls; I find very constantly, in examining rolls, that having been rolled up without any outward cover, the top is gone; sometimes it contains the name of the place, the survey of such a manor; the most important part is gone; it should be rolled the other way, or enclosed.

Are you able from your own knowledge to state, whether they could be preserved by simply stitching together; and what kind of cover would be requisite for an act, if formed into a book?—An honourable Member observes very properly, that the paste is bad, and I have found it so; but I believe there is a paste capable of being made, that would not be liable to that; but the bookbinders are the best to give an account of that; I believe it might be done without any paste at all, in the stitching.

Do you conceive, there would be greater danger of interpolation, by having the parchment in sheets, than there is now in having it in these wide presses, stitched and tied as they are in the Act of Parliament before you?—With respect to interpolation, interpolation is more easy in a book, because there is not the unrolling;

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but I should think there would be no probability of interpolation, in the custody in which those documents are placed.

But if there is a difficulty in getting to any part of a roll to alter it, is there not the same difficulty in obtaining access to a book closely tied up with others in a repository?—I should think so.

Can you state, what kind of ingrossing letter you would consider best likely to be permanent?—I should think this a very good letter; [*the Doctors Commons specimen.*] if you compare it with the old Acts of Parliament in the book printed by the Commissioners of Public Records, it will be found very near some of those.

Do you consider that better than the letter used in the bill before you?—I should prefer this letter to that certainly; this letter is too broad; I have brought a specimen, which perhaps the Committee will be of opinion, is a better sort of ingrossing than the other.—[*Producing it.*]

Would there not be a great advantage in the use of this letter, in saving space, and its being more legible?—Yes, I think that is extremely good; I think that is very good indeed.

Have you ever turned your attention to the mode of writing the bills in round English text?—Yes, I have thought a little of it.

What opinion can you state to the Committee, as to the preference of that?—I should not think the common round hand would answer; I should think that [*the Doctors Commons specimen*] infinitely better; the writer must have a broad-nibbed pen, in order to preserve the writing; and the common hand becomes scarcely legible after a time.

Is there not some increased permanence, by the kind of pen used to write the ingrossing hand, and the pressure it makes on the parchment while writing?—I should think so; I think it is very difficult to write a common round hand on parchment.

Upon the whole, you consider that if that close set ingrossing hand was used, and in the form of a book in leaves, that would be much more convenient, and equally durable as the roll?—I think it would.

You would consider it even preferable?—I should.

Are you aware of any objections?—No, none at all.

Have you had experience of very old books, in the Record offices?—Yes, the Domesday Book is under my own custody.

Is that in binding?—That has been bound since my time; the worms had got into it.

In what state did you find the ancient books as to the worms?—In general pretty good, but the worms had got into some of them.

Are you aware, that in the court of King's Bench and Common Pleas, the records are kept stitched together at one end?—No, I do not know the present practice there, but I should think it a very bad one.

You do not think that that practice is so good as the one you recommend?—No.

You have said, that in all cases where you can put old records into books, you do it; do you bind those books in the ordinary manner?—I bind the books (on account of the great expense that would attend them) according to their supposed value; if it is a book of very little value I sometimes put it into half-binding; if a book of some value, but which does not deserve a Russia binding I bind it in calf, but undoubtedly I mix Russia binding, for it is a great preservation to a library.

Do you not think there would be more danger of losing leaves of books, than there would be of losing a part when the whole was done up in a roll?—No, I do not think there is any great danger of that; I have frequently observed the threading of the rolls give way, and I have had half a roll at one end of the office, and sometime afterwards have found the other half at the other end.

In your experience, are records ever pasted together, or fastened in any other way than by threads?—No, all the old ones are by loose threads, and there have been instances where they have been separated and lost; only three days ago I found a very old roll, which I conceived of value, and in the opening of it, it fell all to pieces from the threads giving way, therefore I rolled it up carefully again to have it repaired and kept together.

Would you think the kind of book doubled, so as to have the two single edges stitched together at the binding, a security against single leaves being taken out?—Yes; I think the best way would be to putting the next to it, so as to secure and keep together; they mutually assist each other.

To what period are the statutes of the realm printed by the Commissioners of Public Records?—The end of the reign of Queen Anne.

It

John Caley, Esq.
Mr. R. H. Strachan,
and
George Whittam,
Esq.

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It is not intended to go further?—No, it is not.

From what record are they printed?—They have been printed from the Parliament roll in the court hand, the roll at the Rolls chapel.

(To Mr. Strachan.) Does the copy in the court hand take notice of the number of divisions and of sections?—Certainly not.

(To Mr. Caley.) From your experience, could you suggest what would be the most convenient sized page for ingrossing in the form of a book, if such should be adopted?—I should think the size of the new edition of the Statutes not too large to be sure, nor too small; the dignity of the thing requires a handsome volume; a folio volume I should think would be best.

You are decidedly of opinion the English round hand would not be so convenient?—Decidedly; that which is before the Committee is properly a chancery hand; the court hand is that which is used by the court of King's Bench in fines and recoveries; it is a very difficult hand to be read, I would defy any but a record man to read the records of George the First's time; but any body can read that.

You think it a great advantage to make use of a hand that is permanent, rather than one which is in its nature fluctuating?—Certainly.

George Whittam, Esq. Examined:

WHAT is the book you produce?—The Test Roll of the present Parliament, [*producing the same.*]

How long have you had those other books you produce?—I cannot say immediately, but in the Report of the Committee on Public Records, there is an account of all the records in my custody as clerk of the Journals.

Has the oath always been written in the round hand?—I believe it has always.

You have not seen any one in the ingrossing hand?—I have not.

[*Mr. Whittam produced the two first volumes of the manuscript Journals of the House of Commons. The first book was handed to Mr. Caley.*]

(To Mr. Caley.) Will you look at that, which is the oldest Journal of the House of Commons, and state in what hand the commencement of it is written?—This is a mixed hand; after the time that there ceased to be exclusively either one or the other; up to a certain time they always had a set hand, but up to that time, since Henry the Eighth's time, they got into a mixed hand; every man wrote as he liked.

What is the date of that?—The first of Edward the Sixth. "Anno Primo Regni Edwardi Sexti."

Does the same hand continue?—No; it is greatly varied.

But still the court hand?—No; the common hand of the time; the latter part is not nearly so good as the first.

Consequently there is difficulty in reading it?—There is none to me; but it is more difficult probably to some persons.

In keeping the records, it seems that about Charles the Second's time, they came back again to the old ingrossing hand?—No; after the time of Henry the Eighth, they ceased to be in an ingrossing hand, and it was a sort of mixed Chancery hand.

When did it come back afterwards; It never went back again afterwards exactly, only in legal proceedings.

Was there any reason for it; any Ordinance or Act of Parliament?—No; I believe not.

[*The second volume of the Journals was handed to Mr. Caley.*]

What period does that take up, and what letter is it written in?—This is the third Parliament of Queen Elizabeth; it goes on with one kind of hand, until the year 1571, it appears to be in one character; then the book changes to another character all English and common, just according to the fancy of the writer; some much finer and better than other; there is no criterion can be formed from these different modes of writing.

After seeing those, you are of opinion, that the ingrossing hand is that which decidedly ought to be preferred?—Yes; I think it is sufficiently broad to be permanent; but there is one thing I would beg to mention, which is of the utmost importance to records, which is very little attended to, and that is the ink; the ink that is used in the offices now, for the making up the records, is of the worst quality, instead of the best.

Are there any particular kinds of ink you would recommend?—I could suggest one, if the secret of making it is not lost, and I hope it is not. There used to be a distribution to the different officers in the court of Exchequer, of whom I was one;

John Caley, Esq. Mr. David Jones, and Mr. R. H. Strachan.

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one; we had the ink made after a particular form by the Exchequer; that ink was better than any other I have ever seen; I should think it easily obtainable.

Who supplied it to you?—The usher of the court supplied it; that is done away with now.

(To Mr. Jones.) What ink do you use, and where do you get it for the ingrossing of bills?—The Stationery office supply that, and the parchment too.

Is it the common ink, or is it for your purpose specially?—It is the common ink; but I believe by exposing any writing to the atmosphere, the ink gets pale sooner than that which is immediately rolled up.

(To Mr. Caley.) What is your opinion upon that subject?—As to some inks, that might have the effect, but I never found it to have the effect as to the ink I have alluded to, which was of the very best quality; and I apprehend the same ink was used in the ancient records, which are so well preserved to this day.

Have you observed different sorts of ink to have been used at different periods?—Yes, certainly; I suppose that kind of ink was used for the Exchequer records; I apprehend that most of the public records were written in that ink.

Are there any records of any particular period, the ink of which has failed more than others?—No, I do not know that that can be said; the ink of Domesday is better than the ink of this day.

Are there any particular offices where the ink is better now than it is in others?—No, they are all alike bad now, I believe; but if you refer to documents either in Chancery or the Exchequer, (the Tower has the Chancery records, and so have the Rolls and the Exchequer various other records) they are all in good ink to a certain period, as long as that ink was in use. I understand there is now a carelessness about the use of ink; and consequently documents up to a hundred years ago, cannot be read so well as those of an earlier date; I know that writings of less than a hundred years old are more difficult to be read, on account of want of care about the ink, than many which are older.

Did not the Committee on Public Records look into this?—Yes, and there is a report of several persons upon the ink.

Has their recommendation been attended to?—No, I believe it has not.

How would you set about recovering the art of making the ink that was used in the Exchequer?—There would be no difficulty, I apprehend, if the usher of the court of Exchequer, who was the particular officer, was applied to officially, that he would be bound to state it.

Who is the usher of the Exchequer?—Mr. Heneage.

(To Mr. Jones.) Do you use the same ink in the Ingrossing office as is commonly used in the House?—Yes, it is the same ink.

(To Mr. Strachan.) Is the same ink used in the House of Lords for ingrossing as for other purposes?—It is the same.

Have you ever, in examining the old Parliament rolls, found the ink faded?—Yes, in many instances it is faded, and we cannot make them out.

Can you state in what period?—Henry and Elizabeth.

Not later?—No.

None of James the First?—No; there are six or eight words at a time, perhaps, in those that we cannot make out.

Do not you consider the ink of Elizabeth's time remarkably bad, and faded extremely?—I think it was so, certainly.

Have you ever observed any of George the Second's, or George the Third's time, faded?—Yes, some of George the Third's have faded already; they have turned brown.

Mercurii, 9° die Julii, 1823.

Mr. John Bull, having produced the Manuscript Journal of the House of Commons for the last Session, was Examined.

Mr. John Bull.

WILL you state to the Committee, in what letter the manuscript copy of the Journals of the House of Commons is kept?—The plain, ordinary style of writing.

How far back are the Journals to be found in that writing?—I should think for forty or fifty years back; for upwards of a hundred years it has been in a good plain hand.

Have you examined many of them during the last hundred years, to see whether any of them are difficult to be read?—No; I believe they are pretty nearly in the same

same hand as that produced to the Committee; they are some of them better written, according to the ability of the clerks who wrote them at the time.

Mr. John Bull. 9th July.

From what period have you the manuscript Journals without interruption?—From Edward the Sixth.

Are any of them, during that period, in ingrossing hand?—None of them, I believe; I have not looked through every volume, but I believe that is the fact.

Are any of them difficult to be read?—The earlier ones are more difficult than the more recent ones, because we are accustomed to that manner of writing; the fashion of writing has altered materially.

Does the manuscript volume produced, contain all the proceedings of the House for a year?—Certainly.

Is this copied from the printed Journal?—Yes, it is copied from the printed Journal, which is printed as rapidly as it can be during the session; the first copy is a very rough copy, and it would be impossible for any person to read it but persons accustomed, for a great deal is done by way of reference; from that the print is produced that is sent to the printer; it is revised and corrected, and made as correct as possible.

After the Journal is completed by the printer, such as is delivered to the Members, this manuscript copy is made?—It is now made from the print; they could not make it out from the materials we send to the printer; it is made at leisure during the recess.

Do you consider this as more of a record, and more likely to be permanent than the printed Journal?—I should conceive so; it was thought proper to keep it up from the period of Edward the Sixth; there is no break.

Is there any advantage in having a manuscript copy, instead of referring to a printed copy?—It is occasionally referred to; formerly those books were tendered as evidence in courts of justice; I believe now they receive in courts of justice the printed copy.

Are you not aware, that by statute a printed copy of the Journals of the Houses of Parliament is made evidence?—I am not aware of that.

What advantage is there from having a written copy of the Journals kept, when you have so many printed copies?—Perhaps it may be useful to state, that it is very frequently the case that persons who want extracts made, examine them with the manuscript, though that manuscript may be made from the print; they consider that as the record.

As the manuscript copy is copied from the printed copy, could not extracts be made with more facility from the original printed copy?—It would be just the same, I should think.

Is there a manuscript Index made to the manuscript volumes of the Journals?—Not now; and for this reason, that the other Index, which is made, and always ready by the meeting of the Parliament at the next session, can be referred to.

The printed Index is an Index to the date?—It used to be, but an inconvenience was found, and now it refers to the pages; for if a day happened to fill twenty or thirty pages of print, there was a necessity of turning from page to page to find the article wanted.

In point of fact, the manuscript copy of the Journals cannot be referred to with as much facility as the printed copy?—Certainly not.

There being in fact no Index?—No; but the thing is found in an instant; for if we turn to any part of the printed volume, we can find it instantly in the manuscript.

It is only by the day, and not by the page, that you find it?—Just so; but by turning to the day, it is found immediately.

What is the expense of preparing one of those Journals?—That I cannot state; but it is done by the clerks, during the vacation, and is certainly of use in making them acquainted with the business of the House, and keeping up their hands. During the session, they have been in the habit of writing a good deal with great expedition, and this serves to keep up their hands; and it puts twenty or thirty pounds into the pocket of each of them, perhaps.

Jonathan Hewlett, Esq. and Examined.

WHAT situation do you hold in the court of Common Pleas?—I am one of the secondaries of the court of Common Pleas.

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Have you not also some office connected with the antient records?—I am not in any office; but it has been the habit of my professional life, for the last thirty or

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forty years, to search for and investigate antient documents; and I have searched, I believe, every public office in London, and in almost every part of the kingdom.

You are enabled, from your experience, to speak to the manner in which the records are kept, in the different courts of this metropolis?—I am.

Can you state in what manner the records are kept in the King's Bench?—The records of that court, containing the rolls of the court, upon which all the proceedings of that court are entered, are kept upon rolls, numbered alphabetically, and at the end of every term are bound up, and sent into the King's Bench treasury; probably each bundle of rolls might be comprised of, I should think, 1,000 or 1,500 rolls. They are bound very closely and tightly together, and put into the treasury, where they are kept, and have been so from the earliest periods.

Do you mean that they are tyed?—I mean tyed with such ligaments that it is impossible for them to come asunder. The Common Pleas records are in the same manner, that is, pleadings in each cause, they are the records; when a man commences an action, and that action is defended, all the pleadings, the declaration, the plea, the replication, the rejoinder, and all the pleadings in the cause, constitute the record; they are entered upon parchment.

What letter is used?—I am sorry to say, in a wretched hand indeed, for within the last twenty or thirty years a mercantile hand has got into use, not the old hand which used to be used by all professional men, but the mercantile hand; and I do really believe, that some of the writing in Westminster Hall now, which has not been there twenty years, is not legible, I firmly believe, and from experience know it, that is, from the mode of writing, as well as from the mode of keeping them. Mr. Justice Blackstone prophesied truly, that when the court hand was left off, there would be such illiterate persons introduced into the profession, that the records would not be legible; and so it is now.

Were the records ever kept in the court hand?—Yes, the records were all kept in the court hand until the year 1734 or 1732, I do not recollect which.

Were they altered by the 4th Geo. 2d?—That was the date the system of writing in the common hand was soon after that commenced; and soon after that act passed, the persons who had been in the habit of writing the records could not get into the common mode of writing; it was a sort of commixed hand, partly court hand, and partly common hand; but within the last twenty or thirty years, I am sorry to say, that the hand used has been a sort of ridiculous mercantile hand, which cannot be read.

You speak of both the courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas?—Yes, the King's Bench more than the Common Pleas; for the Pleas relating to land must necessarily be ingrossed, therefore they are more durable and legible.

Are you prepared to state, whether up to the period of the passing of that Act, the records are more legible than the later?—That will require a little explanation; the mode of keeping those records, and the manner in which they are bound together, has within my experience very frequently been found to be fatal to the record itself; I speak of the records of all the courts, the King's Bench, Common Pleas, and Exchequer; I have seen instances myself, of the most fatal consequences; there are in many of those bundles in both courts, in the Common Pleas particularly, (for formerly all pleas were tried in the Common Pleas, and the bundles were larger, there were 2,000 rolls in a bundle) when any damp has got hold of a bundle of rolls, it has eaten every roll away, it has formed a sort of crescent in the rolls, so that in fact, half the contents of the rolls is obliterated: that, I have often thought is a great evil, because if they had been otherwise kept, or otherwise arranged, so that they might have been opened, probably that the air could have had some means of communication, that consequence would not have ensued; but parchment is a sort of glutinous thing, and for want of air when the damp gets to it, it is actually glue, they are glued together; I have had occasion to strip them off when I wanted to see the contents, and they are pulled away as an eel is skinned.

Have you often found it the case in the rolls, that you cannot unrol them?—Yes.

What is the usual size in which the records are kept in those courts?—Each roll may be about a yard long, and there is a blank of a quarter of that space, that the letter should not be bound in the width, about eight or ten inches.

How are the skins distinguished?—Each roll is numbered at the bottom, there is an officer appointed to number the rolls in each court.

Are

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Are they stitched together in one continued roll, or are they distinct at the end?—Each term is bound up in that blank I have stated to have been left at the top of the roll; supposing this one of the rolls, there would have been a blank of about a quarter for the binding; the writing commences immediately here and goes down to the bottom, then it is turned up and written on the back side; at the bottom of each roll there is a number to it, which number is a correspondent number to one kept in the dockets of the courts, so that by turning to the dockets of each court, the roll may be found answering to that number; for instance; Trinity term, there are 3,000 rolls in that term, each of those rolls, before the roll is taken to the Treasury, is entered on a docket, that is, an account kept of all the rolls with the number and the name of the cause, then we have only to get the number of the roll from that docket in its proper office, which will refer to the roll in the Treasury; they are bound up by hundreds and thousands.

Are those rolls kept separate and the ends tied together, or are they in continual rolls like the bills of the House of Commons?—The ends of all the sheets are stitched together.

[*A bill was produced:*]

This is like the bills of chancery, and the rolls in chancery are kept in the same manner, but our records are not so, each roll of parchment is stitched to the others at the head.

Can you state how the records are kept in the court of Chancery?—Yes; in the Rolls chapel they are kept exactly as these are (the bills); but they are not the records of every office in the court of Chancery; the rolls and deeds, and the patents and grants and so on, are in this way.

Do you mean in the ingrossed character?—In the old court hand; until that Act of Parliament passed which has been referred to, then they took the ingrossing hand, but that must be confined to the rolls at the enrolment offices; there is another description of records of the court of Chancery, which are most important, being the decrees of the court, which are kept in a very different way; in my opinion, humble as it is, a safer way, they are kept in books.

In what manner?—Immensely large books; they are on paper to be sure, but I have been in the habit of searching them for centuries and centuries, and I cannot say that ever I have found a defect in those books at all.

Even upon paper?—Just so; they are bound in immensely large books, and they are paged and alphabeted, and there is a reference to each decree, so that if you turn to the alphabet you find the case.

In what letter are they written?—In the old English character, the court of Chancery hand, until the Act which has been referred to; certainly they are more accessible than in rolls. I have seen a roll in the reign of Charles the First which I can specify, one grant only takes up two large bundles of rolls, three times as thick as the bill produced; when I wanted to see one particular grant of lands, I had to unrol the whole to get at that part of the grant; it is a grant to the city of London.

That is rolled in the same manner as the bills of Parliament?—Yes.

There are two modes of keeping the records in the court of Chancery; one on a continued roll, as the Acts of Parliament are at present kept, and the other in books?—Yes, the decrees are in books; the decrees are most important documents, and so it is in the Exchequer, the same.

How long back have you been able to trace those books of decrees?—As my necessities of business called me; I have searched in the reigns of James the First, Charles, and so on.

Are they all on paper from that period?—The decrees are on paper, and so are the decrees in the court of Exchequer.

Are they bound in books?—Yes.

Have you found any of the books more liable to decay than the rolls?—No, I do not recollect any; there may have been cases where the edges of the paper have been rubbed, but I have not found any great defect in the books; in the rolls I have, much to my mortification.

In what were they bound?—I do not know whether it is vellum, or hog, or what; I believe it is vellum.

Have you found that the binding is liable to give, or do you find it keep good?—I never found an instance of its giving; I never found it unstitched.

Have you found the volumes deficient?—No.

Is the paper written on both sides?—Yes; it is stout thick paper.

And

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And notwithstanding that you have not found, during the whole of your examination, any great defects?—No; there may have been instances probably of defect, but the general contents of the book are preserved.

How are they in the Exchequer?—The decrees of the court of Exchequer are kept in books in the same manner.

In the English language?—Yes.

Have you referred to the decrees before the 4th of George the 2d?—Yes, I have.

In what hand are they written; in the court hand?—I think not in the court hand; they are in the old English hand; I think they are very legible.

Do you find that the decrees since the 4th of George the 2d are legible?—Except till within the last twenty or thirty years, when the mercantile hand has been introduced, the writing was legible.

Will you refer to the manuscript Journal of the House of Commons, which has been produced, and see whether that is what you describe as a mercantile hand?—Yes, this is a mercantile hand; this is not a law hand.

Are there any other records in the court of Exchequer kept, besides those that are kept in books?—Yes, all the proceedings in causes and enrolments of deeds are kept in rolls, and from a very early period.

You do not call the Journal before you, an illegible hand?—No, certainly not; but the records of the court, I am sorry to say, are not in so legible a hand as that, which may be a great injury to families.

Are there any records of the court kept in continued rolls?—Yes.

Are there any of the present proceedings now kept in that way?—I really do not know, but I have no doubt about it at all.

Which have you found most perfect on reference, those that are in books, or those that are in rolls?—Speaking in general, I have found those in books most perfect; there have been cases where rolls have been decayed, and where the vermin or damp have found their way into them, and that I have seen much of.

Have you examined the records at Doctors Commons?—Yes, I have; the original will is put up, that will is copied into what I believe they call the Act-book, an immensely large book; and I have always thought it was the best mode of keeping all public documents.

In what letter?—Ingrossing hand.

Is that the way in which it is done?—*(The Doctors Commons Specimen.)*—Not so good as this; this is a very good hand indeed; I have thought that a very judicious mode; they are bound in very large vellum books, each leaf being written on both sides, and I have never seen any defect or deficiency at all in the writing; I have searched them often; they are bound up in immensely large books, with a very strong binding to it, brass-cornered, and so on, I believe wood covered with leather; those books are placed there from the earliest period, and there are little leather handles, to put them up and take them down by.

What do you call the earliest period?—I really do not recollect that.

Are they all in the ingrossing hand, from the earliest?—The earliest I have seen are in the ingrossing hand.

Do you find any difference in the letters, which renders the writing of one period more difficult to read than another?—Yes; I believe the mode of writing has differed every thirty or forty years from the earliest date; we who are used to them can tell in what date the thing was written, by the hand-writing.

Has the ingrossing hand differed?—It has somewhat.

Has it differed as much as the ordinary writing?—No.

Has the court hand differed more, or the ingrossing hand?—The court hand has differed; the court hand of Edward the First is different from that of Elizabeth.

Considering the records you have seen, what letter do you think would be the best to keep records in, such as the copies of Acts of Parliament; which would be read with most ease two or three centuries hence?—This is the hand in which they should be written *(the Doctors Commons specimen)*, the ingrossing hand close-written; this *(the Act of Parliament)* is very diffuse; that *(the Doctors Commons specimen)* is a very excellent hand, and will keep; it will never decay.

Do you find, in examining the records in Doctors Commons in the ingrossing hand, any destruction or mischief arising from those kind of references which take place?—Not at all; the books are perfect; one would expect to find thumb-marks upon them, but I have never found any words defaced; I have been in the habit of referring to them these forty or fifty years.

If those records had been in rolls, what would have been the state of them?—

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They would have been more in danger; in my office they used to be put in roll until about thirty years ago; they used to be put upon rolls from the earliest period, but it was found to be extremely inconvenient and dangerous, and therefore they have been, since that, put in books.

From what period?—I should think, six-and-twenty years ago; they are bound up in books exactly similar to the decrees of the court of Chancery and the court of Exchequer.

Did that change take place by order of the court?—No, by the observation of the prothonotaries, whose records they were.

It was the result of their observation, as to the convenience of reference and the security of the record?—Yes, it was thought it would be a great deal more safe; ours are called the records of the court; they are the records of every rule or order of the court which has passed; that is the record we are bound to protect; the records of the causes are those I have described, and which are in the Treasury on rolls; therefore I say these are safer than those, I think.

Is there frequent reference made to your records?—I cannot say very frequent.

Those books in Doctors' Commons are frequently referred to?—Every half hour in the day.

Is there any particular kind of parchment used, or is it the ordinary parchment?—I am not sure whether it is parchment or vellum, but it is not a greasy parchment, by means of which the writing gets defaced.

How do you bind your own records?—In large thick binding; not board I think, but the exterior is leather.

What binding would you recommend?—I would certainly have a wooden binding covered with calf.

Are you able to state how the Middlesex Register Office is kept?—That is kept in the same way, in books; they are kept in very large books.

How old is the first record in that office?—That was constituted in Queen Anne's time, 1707, I think.

Are they kept perfect from that time?—Certainly.

In what hand are they written?—In the ingrossing hand; they are on paper now, I think earlier they were on parchment.

Are they quite legible?—They are; and they are in the constant habit of being searched from hour to hour.

In what condition are the paper ones, notwithstanding the frequent examinations?—In very good condition; I have not seen any kind of defacing.

Do they use any of the common English letter, or is it all in ingrossing hand?—It is, I believe, all in ingrossing hand; it is a small close ingrossing.

Are you able to state what number of letters there are on a sheet of any particular size?—I do not believe they are restricted at all to the number of letters; they are in office copies, and so on, on account of the stamp duties.

How many more letters are there than in that press of an Act of Parliament?—A great deal closer than this; the leaves do not correspond with this in width, but it is much closer; I should think one-third closer.

Is it more legible when it is closer written, than when it is more extended?—Yes, I think it is.

And better as a record?—Yes, I think so.

Is the face of the character as broad as it is there?—No, I do not think it is, it is more confined.

Have you ever examined the Pipe office?—I have.

In what manner are the records kept there?—They are kept, I believe, in a manner something like this *(the Bill)* the old ones are much different.

Are you sure whether they are not in the old court hand?—I am not quite sure; I have not been there lately.

Are they in continued rolls, or in slips?—I really cannot say.

In the number of records you have examined in the different offices, have you observed that the ink has given way lately?—I have, in the records written in what I call this mercantile way, observed that; that may be probably not owing to the badness of the ink, but owing to the very imperfect mode of writing now; certainly we do not now know how to make ink; that I believe from observation.

You conceive the antient ink much more likely to last?—Yes, I have had charters and documents in my hands, for the purpose of being translated, and the ink has been entirely chipped off, but I have been enabled to make it out by the impression which was made at the time of writing on the parchment, by the pressure of the pen,

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in many cases; I do not know whether it is indigo, or what, but there was a blue tinge remaining, which has enabled us to make it out, though the ink was gone.

Do you not think, that it would be a very proper measure, if Government were to take some means of inducing gentlemen of chemical science, to prepare some ink for public documents?—It would be an invaluable thing; my own opinion is, that if an infusion of oak bark were added to the common ink, that would render it more stable than it is now.

When the ink was obliterated, and you have been enabled to read the record from the marks which have been left by the pen, was it in the ingrossing or court hand?—In the court hand; written before the Act of Parliament of George the Second.

Do you know whether the records in the court of Exchequer, some forty or fifty years ago, were written with a much better ink than we now have in use?—I have observed that the records of the court of Exchequer, are certainly more black, and consequently more legible than others.

Were you never led to inquire how that was?—No.

Do you observe that to come down to the present day?—No; I speak of modern records; that is within sixty or seventy years.

Have you any knowledge of an ink peculiar to the Exchequer?—No; I have not.

Do you consider, that it would be equally secure as a record, if the Acts of Parliament, instead of being ingrossed on continued skins, were ingrossed on leaves and bound into books?—Yes, certainly, for the reason I have stated; the accidents which have happened, and are likely again to happen to rolls bound in that way, where the damp gets to them; I have no doubt that the safest, and the most likely means to prevent that, would be by entering them in books, on vellum.

In that case, probably you would have a margin at each end?—There must be two margins; the one for binding and the other for the outer-edge; I have no doubt of the books being preferable; an inconvenience from those rolls has happened; for a long roll has consisted perhaps of six yards, there perhaps would be a crease in rolling up the bundle, that crease would, in the process of time obliterate so much of every line as should be within the crease; the consequence would be, it might happen that there might be an important word obliterated, where a question of tithes or other matters might come in agitation. Now I have seen that to be the case.

What is the comparative chance of the letters being obliterated on rolls and on books?—I think there is no kind of possibility of its happening in a book.

Have you not found in Doctors' Commons, where the books have been kept up for centuries, and have been continually referred to, that they have been obliterated?—No; I have not observed that.

Have you observed any inferiority in the parchment of modern times?—Yes I have, very much to my mortification; it is very much inferior, it is spongy, oily, greasy and not sufficiently dressed, in my opinion; we do not find that in antient times; we find the parchment as smooth and as capable of taking writing as it can be.

Is not the parchment of antient times a great deal thinner than it is now?—Yes; I have seen it as fine almost as paper, and yet good parchment.

Do you find that equally well perserved as a record?—Yes; there is no grease in it, it is better dressed.

In your experience, do you think sufficient care is not now taken to have proper parchment for record?—Yes, I do.

Is there any one manufacturer of parchment particularly eminent?—I know nothing of that; I only know that it is done very badly now.

There is a Report office in Chancery-lane, where records are kept?—Yes; that is the office where the decree books of the court of Chancery are kept; they are on paper written on both sides and bound; but I do not remember an instance where I have found, though I have been searching those records for these forty years, a chasm or obliteration in them.

Should you prefer good stout paper, or the present inferior parchment?—Good stout paper by all means; I think the present parchment is liable to decay, but more liable to having the writing fade, from its not taking the ink properly; I have no doubt it corrodes.

In what way do you authenticate the leaves in those books of records, to obviate interpolation or abstraction?—We do not authenticate them; the officer has them under his own care, and sees that they are properly bound up, and they are paged; antiently there used to be a double page, then one leaf had only one number; the officer

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officer who has the care of those records, is bound to see that they are properly put together, and taken into the Record-office for security.

Do you see any greater facility for interpolation, by the manner of binding in books, than by the manner of preserving in rolls?—Not at all; sometimes it will happen, in binding in a continued roll, that part of a membrane may be lost.

Have you not found in old rolls, that from the thread decaying, or from the stitching part giving way, sheets have been mixed in different places, and there has been considerable difficulty in putting them together?—I never found an instance of any part of a membrane being torn out, and spreading; the other injury, by want of careful rolling, I have often found; I have often found that part of a roll has been torn away entirely, but that was not by the stitching giving way.

In those books to which you have referred, have you ever seen any part torn away?—No; I never saw that.

You do not conceive, that from the use which arises from reference, there is any chance of any part of the thread being broken?—No; I cannot conceive it possible, except for mischief; I have never found an instance of it in the course of forty or fifty years.

Sir Thomas Edlyne Tomlins, Examined.

Sir T. Edlyne Tomlins.

WHAT situation do you hold, connected with the Records?—I am parliamentary counsel to the secretary for Ireland, and parliamentary counsel to the Treasury.

Have you had much opportunity of examining into the ancient records of the country?—While I was sub-commissioner under the Records, I had, in preparing an edition of the Statutes.

Can you state to the Committee, what letter you consider most convenient, and likely to be best preserved, for ingrossing any document?—I have always found the oldest hands the most legible; the court hand, which was the original hand for records, was perhaps the handsomest hand that was ever written; the present ingrossing hand results from that court hand; from a continued experience in consulting, particularly Acts of Parliament and records, I find it more easy to read the ingrossing or the court hand, than any other written hand whatever.

Did you hear Mr. Hewlett's evidence?—I heard the latter part of it.

Do you differ from him, in that he has stated?—No; I think he was perfectly correct in his statement, as to Records.

In point of security as a record, taking into consideration the occasional reference to it, what is your opinion as to the best method of having them now done, whether on a continued roll, or on leaves as in Doctors Commons and the other courts?—I think Acts of Parliament differ from all other records; the Committee no doubt are as well aware as I can be, that the bill which goes through Parliament is not the record, that is the original from which the record is made up in Chancery. With respect to the ingrossing or copying of Acts of Parliament, from the experience of about five and twenty years I have had in preparing Acts, and in consulting Acts, I find the present mode of making up the separate bills in parliament the most convenient possible; the only objection which I think can be made to them, is that they are not written within a sufficiently small space; the ingrossment is written too large; the margin is, except in cases where insertions are wanted, which is but occasional, rather too wide, the parchment itself is rather too narrow; and there is not care sufficient to keep the outside margin clear, and to write plain and close. This *(The Doctors Commons specimen)* is a very good mode of writing, and I should say the most legible mode of writing possible to be adopted.

In what way is it more convenient to have bills in a roll, than to have them in separate leaves bound together; does not the one admit of easy reference, and is not the other very difficult of reference?—Every bill in passing through parliament must of necessity be separate; now that *(the leaf form)* would be as convenient a mode for each separate bill as the other is, and rather more so.

You make a distinction between the bills in passing through both houses of parliament, and the mode of ingrossing them afterwards as a record?—Certainly.

You have stated, that the ingrossing hand is the most legible?—To me it is.

Do you know that the ingrossing hand is not the hand that is used to write the rolls of parliament as a record?—I cannot say; the Rolls chapel is the proper depository of them, and I believe they are continued in the old court hand.

Have you ever examined the manner in which the records are kept in Doctors Commons?—Oh yes, repeatedly.

Do you see any objection to the Records of parliament, or the Acts of parliament, being kept in the same manner as they are kept in Doctors Commons?—The bills

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and the records are distinct; I conceive there can hardly be a better mode of preparing the bills than they are at present prepared, provided they were written closer, and more like the specimen produced to me.

What is your opinion as to the propriety or advantage which would attend the writing the bills in a common English round hand, in their passage through parliament only?—I think they would not be so legibly nor so carefully done; there would be a greater variety of hands in every separate bill that might be referred to; there might be, perhaps, a separate hand-writing.

Do you think that the ink of the present day is inferior to the ink you find in antient documents?—Lately I think the ink has been better; very lately that has been the case, I think.

Do you find an alteration for the worse, in the manufacture of the parchment?—I do not trouble myself about the parchment.

As far as your observation has extended?—I think the parchment is worse; if the chairman will permit me, perhaps it will be beneficial for the Committee to direct their attention to the distinction between the books as prepared for the course of business and the record in Chancery; I should certainly think that the mode used in Doctors' Commons would be very beneficially applied to the records of the acts in the Rolls chapel, which extend only to the public acts.

Would it not be better to have them written in an ingrossing hand, which can be generally read?—Certainly; so are all the entries to those in Doctors Commons; but the great advantage of the state in which books now are, is, that every man can refer to the separate act that he wants, without intruding on any other act.

John Bailey, Esq. called in; and Examined.

John Bailey, Esq.

WHAT situation do you hold at the Tower?—I am principal clerk of the Record office and sub-commissioner of the public records.

In your experience in examining records, do you consider that it would be a good plan to use the common English hand, instead of the old letter which is now used?—That depends upon the purpose very much; if it was to be preserved as a record, I should certainly prefer, not the ingrossing hand of the present day, but the hand which was generally used in chancery about the time of Henry the Sixth and Edward the Fourth; I will produce a specimen if you please.

[*The witness produced the same.*]

Why should you prefer this?—It comes in a great deal less space; and whoever is acquainted with records, could read it with much greater facility than the ingrossing of this bill before the Committee.

You mean, that if the words and letters were closer together, it could be more easily read?—One page of that would cover eight or ten of this.

Would there be much difference of time in reading them?—Not when persons became acquainted with them.

Have you yourself had any experience in ingrossing?—I have never ingrossed.

Do you know any persons who are in the practice of writing this hand?—There are persons who write so fine a plain and upright hand, that they would very soon come into writing like that, perhaps as good.

Are you enabled to state the difference of time that would be taken to write that hand on the bills, and this hand?—He would certainly write that in the bills much faster; it is a more leaning kind of hand; I could write it faster than I could the other.

Would you prefer this close hand to the ordinary ingrossing hand?—Decidedly, for preservation as a record.

Have you had any opportunity of examining the records that are rolled up, and those kept in the form of books?—In every office I suppose.

Which do you consider the best mode, considering security and facility of reference?—For security I think the roll would be preferable, but for facility of reference, I think the book is preferable; you are liable to lose part of the book when you cannot a roll; you may have a leaf torn out, supposing it was for the advantage of the party to destroy the record, but they could not take a part of a roll.

The skins are only stitched together?—No; but you might take a leaf out of a book in an instant, even supposing a person was in the room, and perhaps unobserved; but a skin could not be taken from a roll, it would be disjoined.

Would it not be more easy to detect a leaf being taken out of a book than to discover a skin being taken out of a roll?—No, the roll would be in two.

But

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But supposing it were rolled up again, would it not be less subject to detection?—No person would roll up but the proper officer, but a leaf might be taken out of a book and it might not be discovered for years; if a person came into the office, and he had a roll handed to him, and I turned my back, and afterwards found that it had been separated, I should immediately inquire into it, but if a leaf were taken out of a book I should not know it.

That is supposing that individuals are admitted?—They have access to records at all times.

Have you ever missed any part of a roll?—Never.

Have you ever missed the leaf of a book?—I have not had that experience in books which I have in rolls; I have gone over the rolls in the Tower, of which there are 2,000, and I have never missed one.

Do you know whether a leaf was ever missed out of Doctors Commons?—I cannot say that I have had experience of that; in the British Museum there have been leaves torn out of books, and there was a case tried where a gentleman in Herald's college had subtracted a leaf.

Might it not be as easy to take away a whole roll as to take away a leaf?—No, certainly not; if I brought a roll out into the office, and that was taken away, I should miss it before the person left the place.

You heard the evidence Mr. Hewlett gave respecting rolls?—I did.

Do you agree with him as to the injury from damp?—There is the same likelihood in regard to a book; and not only so, but they would be more liable to worms, particularly if it were bound. Mr. Hewlett recommended binding in boards, but that would subject them to worms; I have books in boards which have introduced the worms; I would rather use a strong pasteboard, in which there are various substances which a worm would not get into.

If parchment were put into books properly bound, do you conceive there could be any greater danger or inconvenience as records, than there is in rolls?—So far as respects the security, I think there would.

You mean in regard to a leaf being taken away?—Yes, or part of a leaf.

It would be easier to carry away a roll than a book?—Yes; but it is almost impossible for a roll to be taken away.

In point of experience, have you found more leaves of books torn or taken away, than you have of rolls?—I have never experienced either.

Have you many books in your office?—There are a vast number of books belonging to the Admiralty court.

Up to what period?—Up to the time of Henry the 8th.

On what are they written?—Strong paper.

In what letter?—I believe a good many of them in almost a common hand, or a very plain kind of law hand.

The English hand of the day?—Yes, the law hand; an upright, very plain, strong hand.

Easily legible?—Yes, very legible indeed; the decrees are kept in large books, bound up in volumes.

Have you found any of them injured by reference?—They are records which are not often referred to; those Admiralty papers, as soon as the cause has gone through the court, and the ship is condemned, the book is shut up, and probably not referred to again.

Are they as often referred to as Acts of Parliament?—I should think not; they came to the Tower in 1811, and I do not think, during the time they have been there, that they have been referred to more than once or twice, excepting by the Chief Judge of the Admiralty.

Where were they kept before?—In the Admiralty office.

What other records have you there?—The rolls of Parliament.

Are they often referred to?—They are all printed, so that they are seldom referred to, except where a copy is wanted for evidence, then they are referred to.

Have you found any rolls there, that are not printed?—There are two or three very small pieces of rolls, but the large majority of the rolls of Parliament are printed; but there are three or four thousand of Parliamentary petitions which are not yet printed, but which the Record commission intend to publish.

You say those books are bound; how are they bound, in wooden or parchment boards?—They are covered with parchment, I believe it is strong pasteboard.

Is there a double edge, an inner edge unwritten upon, and an outer edge unwritten upon;

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upon; or are they written full to the edge?—I think, as far as I can charge my memory, there are two margins, which is highly necessary.

Are there are any worms in the Admiralty books?—No, I do not recollect any at all.

You are aware that reference to these books cannot be by any means so frequent as the references to the decrees of the courts?—Certainly not.

Is the binding of the Admiralty books covered with leather?—No, they are covered with parchment, very strong parchment; probably it is hog-skin, I am not sure.

With brass corners?—No, leather thongs, or clasps.

Would you think, that if books were adopted, clasps or ties were necessary?—Certainly, highly necessary.

Do you find much parchment written on both sides?—Yes.

Do you find it to stand?—Yes, if the parchment is good; but the parchment of the present day is not fit for writing on both sides; it is very inferior.

Do you consider the ink of the present day equal to that used a hundred years ago?—It is not half so good, it is exceedingly bad; in the rolls of Chancery, in many instances, I have seen, from Henry the Eighth's time downwards, that the ink has chipped off; that was not the case antiently.

Has no means been taken to secure a good ink for records?—Not that I am aware of; in rolls of Chancery there are lines frequently in which there are not more than a few letters perfect.

Have you any knowledge of any ink now used in one office, superior to that used in any other?—No, I am not aware of any distinction.

How has the ink for the last hundred years been?—It has been of a glutinous nature which peels off; that has been the case from the reign of Henry the Eighth; as to the earlier records, a piece of parchment might be put into water and left for two or three days, and it would not be injured; that has been tried; for several years there have been attempts made to wash them with soap and water; that has not the least effect, but the ink remains brighter and firmer than it was; there was more iron used in the ink in former times than there is now, which has eaten more firmly into the substance.

Jonathan Hewlett, Esquire, further Examined.

Jonathan Hewlett, Esq.

IF it were found proper to put those records into books, do you not consider that clasps or ties should be used in the binding?—Yes, brass clasps; respecting the rolls, perhaps I might be allowed to mention a circumstance; the master of Christ's Hospital once came to me, in the Prothonotaries office in the Temple, with a very large roll, and said a boy had bought it of a man in the street for fourpence; he had sold it to the boy of this gentleman's tailor; the tailor was about to cut it up for measures; not being able to read the hand, he brought it to me to know what it was, and it turned out to be an escheator's roll stolen from the office, of very large bulk indeed; and by that means it was saved; it had been in some way taken out of its place.

(To Mr. Bailey.) You recommend the hand of Edward the Fourth?—About the time of Edward the Fourth or Henry the Sixth; it is the plainest, strongest and the best for a record.

Do not you think that it is vastly too small to be very clear for reference?—I would as soon read that as if it were five times as large, and much sooner.

In all cases where alterations and erasures take place, do you not conceive there would be great inconvenience in having it ingrossed in so small and so close a hand as this?—That would not apply to the record; that would be copied from the document when it was entered in a perfect state: expedition may be necessary before it comes to a record.

Do you not conceive it would be of use that records should be kept in a hand easily legible to the unlearned?—Certainly; but I should think almost any one could read that; I would leave out the abbreviations.

Do you think that any person could read that as well as the ingrossment?—I could read it much more easily.

Have you ever seen the records of the Acts of Parliament kept in the Rolls chapel?—Yes.

Do you prefer that to the court hand?—It is the same hand degenerated; the common ingrossing, as it is now practised, is quite a modern writing.

Francis Cohen, Esq. Examined.

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YOU are a deputy commissioner for records?—I am.

What records?—I am appointed a sub-commissioner for the publication of the Parliamentary records.

Will you state to the Committee, what kind of writing you find on a number of years, going two or three centuries back, the easiest read and the best?—It always happened that legal hands have been somewhat older than the hands of the time; what we call the antient Gothic hands, in which the records are written with various abbreviations, is in fact derived from the Roman notarial hand, and is much older, in point of origin, than the records themselves; and there is always a marked distinction between legal hands and what may be called monastic hands. There may be some confusion now and then, for many of the churchmen were lawyers, but still there is always a distinction between records and documents which may be supposed to have been written in a monastery for common readers. Lawyers accustoming themselves to precedent, copy the forms immediately before them, rather than come down into their own time; but there is a certain degree of advantage resulting from this practice; a very slight degree of difficulty will indispose the lawyer to consult the record itself, consequently every habit which tends to make him acquainted with the hand-writing of preceding times, will facilitate his reference to the records of preceding times.

You recommend one hand to be constantly kept for records?—Certainly I should.

What hand do you consider the best; is it that in which the records of Parliament are kept in the Rolls office, or is it the ingrossing hand?—I have never seen the modern enrolments in the Rolls office, but I should concur in the opinion Mr. Bailey has given with regard to a hand-writing approximating to the hand-writing introduced in the reign of Edward the Fourth, and which is very distinct from any preceding hand, or any in the subsequent times; the only modern rolls I have seen are, the close and patent rolls in Chancery, which are ingrossed in the common ingrossing hand; but with regard to the Pipe rolls, which are made up now pretty nearly in the same form they were in the reign of King Stephen, there is a very peculiar hand used in the heading of them, which is a kind of bastard court hand; it is a very distinct hand.

Is it what is called the old court hand?—I believe it has a degree of resemblance to it, but is more like what is called Set Chancery.

Do you conceive that it would be improper to introduce the present English current hand in any of our records?—I should think that, on the whole, the disadvantages would be greater than the advantages.

Do you agree with Mr. Bailey, in the opinion of the superior security of having long rolls for records; or should you prefer the having records in books?—I should certainly agree with Mr. Bailey; and on the whole, although a roll is inconvenient to consult, yet it preserves the frailest materials. I may instance the papyri, such as the fragment of the Iliad, which will be soon in the possession of Mr. Bankes. This has been rolled up; and though formed of the frailest possible material, hardly stronger than straw, its form preserved it for a great length of time.

What is the oldest book?—The Alexandrine manuscript in the Museum is probably the oldest; that being intended for the church service, was naturally written in the shape of a book; and there are other books of that period.

For consultation, you do not deny that books are the most convenient?—Certainly; but the Acts of Parliament are very seldom required for consultation.

Have you heard the evidence of Mr. Hewlett and Mr. Bailey, with respect to the ink and the parchment?—I have; I should think the fault was more in the parchment than in the ink.

In that case, would you prefer a good paper?—Certainly not. I think the fault arises from their putting too much calcareous matter on the parchment, in order to give it what they call a good face; and I have observed in modern books, printed on vellum, that in order to make them look handsome, they put some kind of preparation of lime on the skin, which makes the ink look very black at first, but after a time it scales off.

But bad as the parchment is, you would prefer it to the best paper?—Unquestionably I would.

At what period do you observe that the ink begins very much to fail?—I can hardly tell; I should say, perhaps about the time of Charles the Second, and then perhaps

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perhaps it may be accounted for. In the time of the Commonwealth, they abolished the court hand in making up records, and introduced the common secretary hand; and on the Restoration, the old mode was re-introduced; but I should think some degree of slovenliness remained in the offices.

In what hands do you find the old rolls of Parliament?—The law hand of the time.

In large characters, or small?—They are all in small characters, until after the time of Henry the Fourth, when they were written in larger characters.

Do you not find that large and loose writing is best, where erasures are made?—Not loose, but a large and compact hand.

Do you think the hand, about the time of Edward the Fourth, would be generally legible?—It would be legible, after a very small practice; children cannot read print in italics, but they soon learn it.

Do not you think the ingrossing hand is a very good hand upon the whole, to continue the records of this House in?—I think, upon the whole, it is.

Does not the common hand vary periodically?—Certainly.

And you can distinguish the ordinary hand-writing of particular periods, if it was shown to you?—Very distinctly, because we know exactly when the Italian hands came in; the hand-writing in the time of Elizabeth, is wretched; we can hardly make it out.

You would know the hand-writing of a hundred years ago?—Yes, there is a peculiar set appearance about the hand-writing, in Queen Anne's time.

If you were to take the hand-writing, at the distance of an hundred and fifty years back, it would be very distinct from that written now?—There is a kind of periodical variation. Some modes of writing continued during a much longer period than others, but still we can form an opinion within fifty years; there is one thing worthy of notice, that it frequently happened that in particular situations, or amongst particular classes of people, particular hand-writings were perpetuated; for instance, schoolmasters, having copies before them, would continue a mode which had been adopted before their time; thus we see the law hand perpetuated, and so on.

Mr. William Gunnell, Examined.

Mr. William Gunnell.

WHAT situation do you hold in the House?—A clerk in the Ingrossing Office.

Have you charge of that office?—The principal charge of it, in the management and arrangement of the business.

Is it managed by you?—It is principally managed by me.

In point of fact, does Mr. Stracey attend to the duties of the office?—Certainly not.

Do you yourself ever ingross?—I do; I have ingrossed in the office now nearly thirty years.

Will you state to the Committee, what difference of time it would take writing in that close hand, *(the Doctors Commons specimen)* instead of that in which bills are commonly written?—In ingrossing in this diffuse manner *(the bill)* the comparison would be between a man who writes a stiff hand, and a man who writes a free hand; and you may easily conclude, that a man sitting down to copy with a stiff cramped hand like the small ingrossing, will not get on so freely as a man who writes a free hand; it would take longer to ingross in this way, but I submit this is capable of being contracted a little; that would improve its general appearance, but it would take longer time, and if carried to a great extent, would be more expensive; for this reason, in proportion as it takes a man time to make a copy of a thing, so in proportion he must be paid, and he would take more time about this.

You think it would be more a matter of expense than of time?—The one would be consequent upon the other, for if it occupies more time, the labourer must be remunerated accordingly.

If there was additional time required, could not the work be done in the same time, by employing more hands?—I do not apprehend that we can employ more hands; I think I have upon my list, six law stationers, and I should think through those six, I do not employ less than a hundred men at a time occasionally.

In what manner are the bills commonly ingrossed; are they ingrossed within the House?—No; we send them to the law stationers; it would be utterly impossible for them to be done here, we have no accommodation for so large a number of clerks about the House, and it would be attended with great inconvenience if they came here.

Will

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Will you state the proportion of the two specimens before you, which the sheet will hold?—If this *(the bill)* was compressed to the extent of one-third more, there would be a great improvement in the general appearance of the roll; if it went beyond that, from the number of alterations, it would be inconvenient; we frequently ingross bills even in anticipation of the Committee, and after that alterations are made, and we have to erase a line or two, to introduce words, if the writing was much compressed, it would render it necessary perhaps to throw that away; there would be the loss of the parchment itself, and the labour, and possibly a great hindrance in the expedition of getting the bill ready for the House; there would be a very serious inconvenience, perhaps, in detaining witnesses from the country, at a very great expense.

Are not the alterations, or corrections, in the body of the bills, generally now made in the margin?—That is on the third reading, and that is the distinction, because the amendments made in the margin are to corroborate the entries made on the Journal, that if it should be a matter of inquiry at any future time at what period that amendment was made, by reference to the Journal it will be said, in press so and so, in line so and so; after such a word insert so and so; that will be found to tally; that is made in contradistinction to clerical errors.

May not that be equally made by putting the correction in the margin, instead of interlining it?—No; because we never carry any thing into the margin except what is done on the third reading; if there was a clerical error we should not carry it into the margin, because it would appear from that to be done under the sanction of the House.

What check is there on the amendments in the margin, if they are not entered in the Journal?—They are entered in the Journal.

Why should not the clerical errors be?—The bill is supposed to go into the House in a perfect state, as to the ingrossment, and so it does generally.

The difference you make, as to clerical errors?—Not merely clerical errors, but revisions of the parties interested in the measure.

Making allowance for room to make the corrections stated, you still think that one-third more letter could be introduced without inconvenience?—I think that they might; that the general average is about three copy sheets, or three copy sheets and a half; and that if four was got in, which I believe is the rule in the House of Lords, it would be better.

In the House of Lords you think there are four sheets of seventy-two words each?—Yes.

And in the ordinary presses of the House of Commons, there are usually about two and a half?—From three to three and a half.

Is that all which you think may be saved in point of space?—I do not think there could be any other saving, with advantage.

Are you aware that the law stationers, to whom you send out those bills, find any difficulty in getting them copied for you?—No, I am not aware that they find any difficulty, for they have a number of hands ready to put upon them.

What difficulty do you see in their being ingrossed in a smaller letter, similar to the specimen that you have before you?—It would take longer time.

Supposing six men were employed to do that which four men are now employed in?—It could not be done; they could not cut a piece of print into six pieces, and put six men upon it.

It is on the large bills the difficulty arises, is it not?—We have an amazing quantity this afterooon; probably there will come down thirty or forty sides of print, which must be ready for a third reading to-morrow.

That is only at the close of the session, is it?—Yes, sometimes at other parts of the session; we never know when to reckon for it; a man would copy a page of print in half an hour; if he was obliged to compress it so small, probably it would take him an hour and a half, and that man could not copy it all himself, there must be two or three persons put upon it; every letter made in this way *(the Doctors Commons specimen)* is cut, and the pen halts in order to form the angle; but in writing this way *(the bill)* he goes on in a free easy kind of way.

How much more or less time is taken in the ingrossing, than in the common English hand?—In ingrossing on parchment we make use of a very strong quill, a turkey quill, that is the only one found to answer; that is cut with a broad point, and we have not to lean hard to form the substance of the letter, but from the breadth of the pen, it makes it as it goes on; if we were to write the common round

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round hand, we should be obliged to make use of the small quills, because it would require greater elasticity, and consequently would press upon the parchment; the rough nature of the parchment is such, that the pen would require nibbing every two or three minutes, which would be attended with great trouble and loss of time.

Supposing it were written on paper, what would be the comparative time of writing in round hand, a certain number of words on paper or parchment?—It would take very little more time; I should think it makes all the difference whether a man is in the habit of writing that round hand; I think it would take up equal time or a little more than the ingrossing, the man being equal in the different modes of writing.

But it could be put in a much smaller space than the common English hand?—Yes, certainly.

Would not the quantity of parchment which might be saved in that way, pay for the extra labour of writing it?—No, I should apprehend not.

Are you aware of the expense of the parchment?—I should think the cost of parchment for our office during the session, is from five to six hundred pounds.

What would be the cost of the parchment for the bill before you, and what the cost of the writing?—The copy of that will be from five-and-twenty to thirty shillings; the skins, I believe, are about fourteen or fifteen pence a skin.

What do you consider the cost of writing a press as they are now written?—The stationers are paid ninepence a press.

That is two-thirds of the value of the parchment?—Yes.

How many words is that to contain?—There is no limit; they put in about three copy sheets, or from that to three and a half.

You think it is not simply a matter of expense the writing it closer and better, but that it is a matter of expedition?—It is a matter of expedition and expense too, if they were to write closer, they must be paid more.

What would be the difference of the payment to the scribe, between the two *(the bill and the Doctors Commons specimen?)*—This *(the Doctors' Commons' specimen)* could not be written for less than eighteenpence or two shillings in the way it is.

Does that contain twice as many letters as the other?—Yes, more than that.

Do you see any inconvenience likely to arise from the skins of parchment being written in a book form, and not in the present form?—For the purposes of reference in the last stage of a bill, it would be very convenient to have them in that form; but for the purpose of preservation, I apprehend the roll has great advantages; there is much less space exposed to the air, and consequently it is less subject to casualties.

What surface is exposed to the air in a book?—There is more exposed in the square form than the round; when it is put away, it is very closely rolled.

Have you ever seen any old rolls undone?—I have never seen any older than the records of the House of Lords.

Are you aware that rolls that are referred to, are very often worn out at the outside, so that they are very much defaced?—No, I am not aware of that.

You speak merely of the rolls of Parliament?—Just so.

Are they ever referred to?—They are referred to occasionally I apprehend, but they are not in my custody, therefore I cannot speak to the degree to which they are referred to.

You think, in regard to the bills while passing through the House, this form would be most convenient?—Yes; but that is only for one day; it is not referred to, except at that time in the House. I have often been in the House for several hours, and have been up to my knees in parchment; it used to be the practice to make the amendments at the table, there I used to feel myself very much distressed; I used to unrol them, and show the different presses; but we were up to our knees in parchment, and the crackling and noise greatly interfered with the proceedings of the House.

At present the amendments are not made in the body of the House?—No; they are approved of, then the bill is sent out to the office, and I always examine them myself.

Do you examine them by anything?—By the paper which comes out of the House; press so and so, after such a word insert so and so.

Is there any person examines them after you?—No, except some instances of public bills, or some instances of private bills; where parties take such an interest, they will come down to see that they are correct; but I hold myself responsible for them.

Would

Mr. William Gunnell.
9th July.

Would you not feel yourself more capable of making the references, if they were in small books like what you call the House Bill?—It might be more easy, but from habit I feel no inconvenience from rolling up and unrolling.

What time would it take you to roll up a bill of one hundred and fifty presses?—I could do it in ten minutes.

What is the largest bill you have known?—The Land Tax Bill.

How many presses does that contain?—About six hundred presses.

How many feet will that make?—About nine hundred feet.

Does that bill pass every year?—No, only every new parliament, when the nomination of commissioners takes place.

There is a bill goes through every year?—Yes, but that merely amends names which have been omitted, and so on.

How many minutes would you be in unrolling that and rolling it up again?—That would take an hour and a half, or two hours; for when there is such an amazing quantity it tires the muscles of the arm.

Have you no wheel for doing it?—No, it could not be done in that way, it is all tight in the centre.

What is the ordinary length of bills?—They vary according to the clauses in the bills; a road bill, previously to the passing of the general Turnpike Bill by Mr. Frankland Lewis, averaged 115 presses, at present they average about forty.

Would it not be more convenient in all stages to refer to that bill, if it was in the form of leaves, instead of being in that roll, putting its inconveniency as a record out of the question?—It certainly would be more convenient, because we should not have to roll and unroll.

The bills are never returned to this House after they are passed?—When the Lords amend them, the ingrossed copy is sent back with the paper amendments made out.

Where are they ultimately kept?—When this House has agreed to the amendments, the ingrossment goes back again to the Lords.

Are they often referred to there?—A copy of them is made and sent to the King's printer; if any doubt arises on the accuracy of the King's printer, they are then referred to.

Mr. Robert Harvey Strachan, further Examined.

Mr. R. H. Strachan.

IN the Parliament office you have the charge of the bills after they come up from the Commons?—Yes.

Is reference often made to those bills after a fair copy is taken?—Very rarely.

Do you keep a paper copy of your bills?—The House copy.

In the same place?—Not in the same room; the paper room is one room, and the parchment room another.

Is there any reference ever made to the paper copies?—Occasionally they are got down when agents come to frame bills.

Merely for a few years back?—Yes, merely to look at.

What is the oldest date of which you have got a paper bill?—We have got some of 1600.

In what state is the paper of them?—Very brown, but the writing is legible.

Have you compared that with the writing on the parchment?—No.

But as far as you know, the writing is perfectly legible?—Yes.

You have not found worms get into the paper?—Not that I have seen.

They are in your care?—They are not in my individual care; I am a clerk in the office; I have to refer to them.

Are the rolls of parchment in the Parliament office now connected, or are they finally kept in separate bills?—They are kept in separate Acts.

Formerly all the Acts of one Parliament were in one roll?—Not since the reign of Henry the Eighth; they have been separate Acts since that.

Every separate Act is kept in a separate roll?—Yes, all the bills in the Parliament office are separate.

Each bill in the Parliament office is finally kept as a separate roll?—Yes; in the former reigns each session is put up in a bundle, but each Act is separate.

In what manner are the amendments introduced by the House in the bills, by erasure or by addition on the margin?—Erasure and addition both; if any thing is to be left out, it is by erasure, and if it is to be added, by interlineation.

After the copy has been carefully taken and sent to the Rolls chapel, if application is made to you to look at any part, do you not consider the copy you have sent as the official copy?—We look at our copy, and consider that our official document.

If

Mr. R. H. Strachan. and Mr. W. Gunnell.

9th July.

If an extract from any Act is wanted, do you refer to the bill which went up from the House of Commons, or do you refer to the copy you have made separately?—We refer to the copy sent up from the House of Commons,

The rolls in the Rolls chapel contain a number of Acts?—Yes; we make them up to a certain size, so as to fit the shelves in the chapel; they are a certain depth; we put from sixty to eighty presses in a roll, according to circumstances; one Act of Parliament sometimes runs longer than another, and we are compelled to have three or four more skins on that account.

You will put in two or three or four Acts of Parliament, until you fill a certain number of presses?—Certainly; there are two Acts contained in one, one Act in another; the Mutiny Act would be one roll by itself.

Do you make any particular entry at the end of a session, in the last part of a roll, to signify that it was the last Act of Parliament passed during the session?—The clerk of Parliament signs it at the end of the session.

If the last press in the roll made up ends in the middle of a section, would you begin the next roll of Parliament with the next word?—We commence a new Act with a new roll, there is no break of any Act; not part of it in one roll and part of it in another.

(To Mr. Gunnell.) With regard to writing on paper; do you find it easier to write on parchment than on paper?—No; certainly not; I think it would be easier to write on paper than on parchment, parchment varies.

With respect to ink; do you find that falling off?—I have found a great deal of difference; sometimes we get it very good and sometimes very bad; we have been supplied from the Stationery office; and we had a species of ink sometime ago made by a man of the name of Gilchrist, evidently holding some metallic oxide in solution, copper I apprehend, because on dipping a steel penknife into it, it immediately adhered and came out with a surface of copper.

Is not each bill now much longer than it was formerly; is it not the habit to make the bills much longer than formerly?—There are a vast number of clauses introduced now, that were not formerly.

The technical language is the same as it used to be?—Yes.

Is not the Mutiny Bill re-printed without any alteration?—There are alterations in the language; I have ingrossed that for twenty or thirty years, and there have been alterations as to clauses.

Is there any new wording in the old clauses?—Yes; in a great many.

Do you mean, without making any alteration in the enactment, merely that they are put in different words?—It will make some difference in the enactment no doubt; I have not studied the bearing of the clauses, but there certainly is a variance in the bearing.

George Whittam, Esq. further Examined.

George Whittam, Esq.

IT has been stated to the Committee, that the Journal is annually copied from the printed copy, after you have corrected that?—It is, since the new mode of making up the Journal.

Since what period was that?—It was when the Votes began to be printed in their present form

In the time of Lord Colchester?—Yes, in 1817.

Before that period, how were the volumes compiled?—They were compiled by the printed Vote, having corrections made in it, on reference to the minute books, and to papers that were thought proper to be introduced.

Since the alteration in publishing the Votes, the printed copy has been a more correct copy?—It has.

And this written copy is made from the printed one?—Yes; if it is found that there is any inaccuracy in the printed copy, which, from the mode in which it is printed, (being done shortly after the proceedings take place) will occur, a correction is made in the manuscript, so that the manuscript in that respect may be reckoned to be more perfect.

In point of fact, are there frequent corrections of that kind?—No, there are not.

The Journal is all paged; do the pages correspond with the pages in the printed copy?—Certainly not.

To each printed copy there is a regular index?—Yes.

Have you an index to the written copy?—None since 1817, I believe.

Of what use do you consider it, to continue the practice of copying the Journals in that way?—One principal use I conceive to be, to make the junior clerks acquainted

George Whittam, Esq.

9th July.

acquainted with the business (being in the habit of writing the proceedings), and it is employment for them during the recess.

What clerks do you mean?—The junior clerks in my office.

Are they paid so much per sheet, or paid so much a year?—They are paid by the folio.

Can you state what the expense, on an average, of the last four or five years has been?—I can state the particulars, and the average may be drawn from them. I will enumerate any the Committee may wish.

State any number of years?—In 1822, £.142. 18*s.*; in 1821, £.137. 12*s.*; in 1820, £.109.; in 1819–20, £.36. 8*s.*; in 1819, £.179. 2*s.*; in 1818, £.101. 6*s.*; in 1817, £.112. 8*s.*

In those written volumes, is there any part of the Appendix of the printed copies, or is it merely the proceedings of the House?—It is merely the proceedings of the House, what we call the Journal, excluding the Appendix and the table of contents of the Appendix.

In case of any error being discovered in the printed copy, cannot the corrections be made in such copies as are retained in the House as official copies, and the same purpose be answered which you now have by that written one?—Certainly that might be done, if it was thought sufficient and proper.

Is it not accumulating records, and taking up room in the House, as well as incurring expense?—I think there is a main object answered by it, and that is in case (which has happened) the House think proper to expunge any part of the entries in their Journal; then the manuscript copy is produced, and the Clerk expunges it in compliance with the order of the House.

Could not that be done in the printed copy, by the signature of the Clerk or the Speaker, or whatever authority might be necessary, in the same way?—It might be done certainly.

Would there be any difference, in point of authenticity or form, between doing it in the margin of a printed book and a written book?—None, but there is a series of manuscripts from Edward the Sixth to the present time.

You consider that in fact keeping up the series is the principal thing?—Keeping up the series is one reason; the employment of the clerks I consider to be a very material one; and the possibility of the House thinking it proper to expunge any of the entries, I conceive to be another reason.

As your experience is very considerable, do you think that any facilities would be afforded to the proceedings of the House, if the bills were ingrossed in sheets numbered as the presses are, instead of being in rolls?—Being present when Mr. Gunnell was giving his evidence, I think that he gave what I should conceive to be a complete answer to that question; and I beg to state my agreement with him, that except on the third reading of a bill, there is no occasion to refer to the ingrossment; and the amendments now being made in the Ingrossing office, I do not see that the time of the House would be at all saved by that.

If a Member wished, before the third reading came on, to examine the Bill, and see whether the amendments that had been made in the Committee the day before, were made, would not the mode of leaves afford a great facility for that reference?—It certainly would.

The bill, being in leaves in the ingrossed state, would not that afford a facility to reference on the part of any Member, who wished to see whether the amendments were made, which the present mode of rolling does not?—I have not the least doubt, that if a Member was making a reference by himself, it would be more easily done; but the Ingrossing clerks, in their own office, are so much in the habit of handling the roll, I conceive they would refer to it quite as expeditiously.

Must there not be a difference of time in rolling and unrolling, instead of turning over the leaves?—There must be the time for finding the clause.

Why do you, in the House copy, use leaves; that must be for the facility of reference?—Certainly.

Will not the same rule apply to the bill when ingrossed, as when it is written?—It would, but not to the same degree.

Has it ever occurred to you, whether ingrossing might not be dispensed with altogether, from the manner in which the records are kept; whether good paper would not answer the purpose?—It never did occur to me, till the moment that I heard it mentioned here.

What becomes of the paper copies of the Acts of this House, made before ingrossing?—They are in my custody as Clerk of the Journals, from the earliest times.

George Whittam, Esq. — 9th July.

Where are they kept?—In the long gallery, and in different presses under my care.

In examining those documents, do you find the paper much decayed, or do you find them tolerably legible?—The paper is very frequently apparently rotten, when the bundle is untied.

What advantage is there then in keeping them; have you, in point of practice, had frequent occasion to refer to them?—Very frequent occasion, as to bills that have not passed, or received the royal assent; in those cases the bill is often referred to.

Where bills have passed, the reference is very seldom?—Very seldom, unless some doubt arises as to any inaccuracy that may have taken place in the progress of the bill, where they want to refer to the bill and the amendments.

What is your opinion, with regard to the goodness of the inks that are used in records, in both Houses of Parliament?—I think at present the ink may be reckoned much better than I have known it to be; but there is some reason to complain, and my particular desire and direction, when I order ink, is to have the best.

Of whom do you order it?—Of the Stationery office.

Do you order any peculiar ink, or merely the ink in common use?—I believe that it is a sort of patent ink, from having a seal at the top, that is sent, in consequence of directions given at some time or other by me, to have the best.

Do you not consider that it would be of great importance to have a better ink than is now used for the records?—Yes, I have no doubt it would be a very desirable thing.

Has any inconvenience occurred in any of the manuscript Journals in your possession, from the failure of the ink?—In two or three volumes which I can produce to the Committee, the ink appears to be so bad that the writing is now hardly legible.

[*Mr. Whittam* produced the manuscript Journals for 1795 and 1799, which were compared with the Journal of 1715, and appeared to be very pale, the ink of that being quite black.]

Jovis, 10° *die Julii*, 1823.

Mr. William Tubb, called in; and Examined.

Mr. William Tubb. — 10th July.

WHAT office do you hold?—I do not hold any office myself, but I attend for the deputy of the chief usher in the Exchequer.

It has been stated to the Committee, that there was in the possession of the usher a receipt for making ink for the public offices; are you able to state to the Committee whether that receipt now exists?—To the best of my knowledge or belief I do not believe that receipt ever existed. The chief usher procured the materials from a druggist, and they were given to an old man, who used his own discretion in making this ink; the chief usher only supplied the materials.

When was that?—Previous to the year 1815.

Has the supply of ink to the Exchequer been from the Stationery office, since that time?—Not to the court of Exchequer, but to the other offices; the Augmentation office and other offices; it has been discontinued now.

Has the old man left no family?—He has left a wife and family.

Do not they know how to make ink?—I never inquired.

Have you an opportunity of referring to the documents in the office, to judge how far the ink of that period is preferable to the present ink?—No, I have not.

Who was the old man who used to make the ink?—A Mr. Brown of Westminster, residing close by; I know the quantity of materials that were used, if that would be of any service.

You know the quantity of materials used to make a given quantity of ink?—Yes; we continue now to supply the court of Exchequer with ink; another old man now makes it.

You know the materials of which the Exchequer ink was composed?—Yes.

Will you state what you conceive to be the materials?—Forty pounds of galls, ten pounds of gum, and nine pounds of copperas to forty-five gallons of rain water.

Do you conceive that those are the same materials which have time out of mind, been used in the Exchequer?—I conceive they were used by this old man, whose ink is so very much prized; this receipt was taken from the mouth of this old man.

Mr. William Gunnell, called in; and further Examined.

Mr. William Gunnell.

10th July.

YOU have stated, that after the third reading of a bill, when amendments are ordered, you make the corrections in your office, agreeably to the paper of amendments?—We do.

When bills are returned from the Lords, with amendments made by the Lords, how do you do with those amendments?—Those bills never go into our office at all; if the amendments are agreed to by the Commons, the bill is returned to the Lords, and a Member at the same time signifies the sanction of the House to the amendments; and those amendments are introduced by their own officer.

Then in case of the Commons making any amendments on the Lords amendments, how are the entries made?—Precisely in the same way; they send back the paper of those amendments, and they are entered by the officers of the House of Lords.

What is the difference between a rider and an amendment; in what way are riders added to bills?—Riders are always distinct clauses, amendments form parts of clauses.

In what manner are those riders introduced into the bills?—They are ingrossed upon separate sheets of parchment, and are attached to the bill by a slight stitch, with a reference upon the head of the rider naming the press, the line, and the word after which that rider is to be inserted.

In what way is a rider amended in the House of Commons?—The same as a clause precisely; a paper of amendments is made referring to that rider, and if words are introduced, they are introduced in the margin.

That is after the rider is passed?—After the rider has received the sanction of the House.

Before the passing of the Bill?—Before the passing of the bill.

Is it not amended in the same manner as any other part of the bill?—Yes, it goes through precisely the same process as any clause.

But it only goes into a committee in cases where it is for penalties or money votes?—It is only in those cases that it goes into a committee.

Whatever came into a committee, you would deal with as you would with a clause upon a report;—Precisely.

You remember last year, that the Marriage Act was returned from the Lords with only nine lines of the Commons original bill which were not amended; in what stage or in what manner were the Lords amendments ingrossed or erased from that bill?—I have not inspected the record, and the amendments being made in the Lords office, it never comes into our office.

Are all amendments made by the Lords, on bills sent from the Commons, entered in a paper which accompanies the bill back?—Certainly; the bills, when sent up to the Lords, amended, have a paper of amendments, similar to the paper on the third reading in the House.

In case amendments are made a second time on a bill which has come from the Lords, is the same process observed as with the first amendment?—Precisely.

In case the Lords do not agree to those amendments, is a conference then required?—Usually; the Lords may forego them, but in such a case as that, if there is any difference of opinion, a conference would be held.

REPORT

FROM THE

SELECT COMMITTEE

ON THE PRESENT

METHOD OF INGROSSING

BILLS;

&c.

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